

40. Persecution

The Bible warns that faithfully following God inevitably results in persecution and difficulties. But as this chapter shows, it also provides practical teaching on what to do when faced with persecution – and even gives reasons to rejoice.

Have Faith in God

Trust in God

[PAUL, TO THE BELIEVERS AT CORINTH:] My friends, I want you to know what a hard time we had in Asia. *Our sufferings were so horrible and so unbearable that death seemed certain.* ⁹*In fact, we felt sure that we were going to die. But this made us stop trusting in ourselves and start trusting God, who raises the dead to life.* ¹⁰*God saved us from the threat of death, and we are sure that he will do it again and again.*
2 CORINTHIANS 1:8B–10 CEV

Do not be afraid

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹*Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.* ³⁰*Even all the hairs on your head are numbered.* ³¹*So do not be afraid; you are more valuable than many sparrows.* MATTHEW 10:28–31 NET

Pray to God, asking for help

[THE EARLY BELIEVERS:] And now, *Lord, listen to their threats. Lord, help us, your servants, to speak your word without fear.* ³⁹*Help us to be brave by showing us your power to heal. Give proofs and make miracles happen by the power of Jesus, your holy servant.* ACTS 4:29–30 NCV™

Note that the believers' prayer was for God to work through them during their persecution, rather than simply for God to stop the persecution.

Be Faithful to God

Remain faithful to God and Jesus Christ

[JESUS CHRIST, TO BELIEVERS:] Don't be afraid of anything you are about to suffer. Listen! The Devil will put you to the test by having some of you thrown into prison, and your troubles will last ten days. *Be faithful to me, even if it means death, and I will give you life as your prize of victory.* REVELATION 2:10 GNT

Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering

[THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God's throne.* ³*Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up.* HEBREWS 12:2–3 GNT

Rejoice in Persecution

Rejoice because trials develop Christian character

[JAMES, TO BELIEVERS:] *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you are involved in various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.* ⁴*But you must let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.* JAMES 1:2–4 ISV

Rejoice because of rewards for enduring persecution

How blessed are you whenever people hate you, avoid you, insult you, and slander you because of the Son of Man! ²³*Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for your reward in heaven is great!* LUKE 6:22–23A ISV